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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 000646

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/EPSC AND WHA/CEN
STATE FOR EB/TRA (DHAYWOOD)
TREASURY FOR DDOUGLASS
COMMERCE FOR AVANVUREN, MSIEGELMAN
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAM

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EWWT](#) [ETRD](#) [ECPS](#) [EINV](#) [PGOV](#) [KMCA](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: EMBASSY SUPPORTS CSI FOR HONDURAS

REF: MANDOJANA/DUNN EMAIL OF 03/14/05

1. Post strongly supports the Government of Honduras, request to be included in the next tranche of countries invited to join the Container Security Initiative (CSI). The GOH has shown an awareness of the importance of maritime security and demonstrated the political will to take the necessary steps to improve it. Pursuant to ref A, Post would welcome an assessment visit at the earliest opportunity by a Department of Homeland Security/Customs and Border Patrol evaluation team.

2. Honduras recognizes the importance of secure maritime trade, both to facilitate growth and to reassure trade partners (particularly the U.S.) that its exports pose a low threat to their national security. Post worked closely with the GOH in 2003-2004 to ensure that the GOH met the July 2004 International Maritime Organization (IMO) and U.S. Maritime Transportation Safety Act (MTSA) certification deadline for port and vessel security. Post organized and supported the first U.S. Coast Guard inspection in Latin America. Honduras passed that inspection with flying colors and has been cited by the USCG for certain best practices in port security.

3. In December 2004, the GOH unilaterally decided to implement gamma-ray non-intrusive scanning of all containerized traffic through Puerto Cortes, the largest port in the Central American region and the 4th ranked in Latin America in volume shipped to the U.S. The scanning equipment is already in-country, and operations are scheduled to commence on May 1, 2005. The equipment, supplied by U.S. firm Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), consists of one portal-style Vehicle and Cargo Inspection Systems (VACIS) and two mobile (truck-mounted) VACIS. The equipment has a combined through-put of approximately 1,000 containers per day, comfortably exceeding current needs based on a 2004 annual port volume of approximately 245,000 import/export movements.

4. Inclusion of Honduras in the CSI program will improve maritime security, expedite international trade, assist in counter-narcotics efforts, facilitate implementation of the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), and protect the security of the U.S. homeland. Improving the security and efficiency of Puerto Cortes also directly supports the U.S. foreign aid strategy of promoting economic development in Honduras through export-led growth. Including Honduras in the CSI program is fully consistent with key U.S. foreign policy and national security goals in the region. Post strongly supports this request.

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